



## FRIENDS OF ASHENENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS

CONSERVATION: PROTECTION: ENHANCEMENT; ENJOYMENT

### NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2014/15

In this issue Michael writes of problems we have had in the past few months with construction work on the final stages of Bolnore Village, and about the woods from a Bolnore resident's perspective. Lorraine has a brief word about bird song, and I have a nostalgic look back at Autumn.

This year we have decided to hold our AGM in Bolnore – in The Woodside – the new community facility on the leisure field. The meeting will be later than usual, on 1 March 2015. Subscriptions are due on 4 January (details on page 3). Formal notice of the AGM will be sent to you nearer the time. We have a new Secretary (Michael Bradley) and a new Treasurer (Peter McKerchar) - both to be confirmed at the AGM.

Another change is that we have decided not to send out the conservation programme with the newsletter. The task days remain constant (details on page 4) and if we have advance notice of other events, that will also be included in this section. The programme, and information about other events, will be on the notice boards as usual.

*Gill Rogers*

#### Crest at Bolnore

I had hoped to be able to write constructively about what has been happening with Crest at Bolnore. You may have read or heard about it, and some of you have made your feelings known. Thank you.

At the time of going to print, early December, it is too early to get into much detail. Boundaries of buffer zones have not been adhered to. Trees and hedgerows have been destroyed. Clearly something has gone seriously awry with Crest's compliance with the conditions included in the planning consent.

We don't yet know what enforcement action MSDC are taking over breaches of conditions to planning approvals: nor whether it is at an end.

In addition, HGV traffic seems to be blatantly ignoring the agreed restrictions



on access to and egress from the development site.

It would be good to hear what Crest are going to do to make amends.

The best I can offer is a full report at the AGM on 1st March. As Secretary, I expect to be busy!

*Michael Bradley*

## Autumn

On a really dreary December morning I'm looking back to the wonderful warm days in early Autumn, with hedges and verges bursting with seeds and berries. Seed and fruit are expensive to produce, but tempt creatures into dispersing the seed away from the parent plant, where seedlings may stand more chance of surviving.

Berries are eaten, but the seeds often survive – you've all seen the mess the blackbirds leave after they've feasted! There are creatures that can cope with hard seeds like acorns. Jays and squirrels bury them, and that suits the tree fine! It usually means the acorns end up further away from the tree than if they had just dropped.

Animals with fur (including those with socks!) carry hooked seeds for miles. Burrs, goosegrass (or cleavers), sweet chestnut and many other small easily overlooked plants contribute to the sock problem! Some plants use the wind, and produce masses of seed because most of it will fall in unsuitable places. Dandelions, willowherb and willows have fluffy seeds, which can travel for miles. The winged seeds of ash and hornbeam come to ground nearer the tree.

Many plants have pods, which often burst open explosively – broom and vetch, and the invasive intruder Himalayan balsam.

Hedgerows and field edges were rich with ripening seed. The Railway Path was particularly so. This is why we leave patches uncut when we mow it in October –partly as food for wildlife, and partly to make sure the seeds have as long as possible to mature.

*Gill Rogers*



## Silence in the Woods

In late summer and into autumn there has been a noticeable lack of bird song in the woods.

Blackbirds, Robins, Wrens, were heard and seen over the summer months, but I have not seen or heard the song of Mistle Thrush or Song Thrush since early May. Blackbird sightings have been fewer than expected and the majority of those seen have been male. Robins have not been seen in usual numbers over the same time period.

I don't know the reason for the drop in numbers of song birds. I asked Phillip Clay, who takes our annual Bird Walk, if numbers were down nationwide. He said lack of sightings could be due to the birds feeding on this year's ample supply of berries on the outer edges of woodland. You can see the full list of bird sightings on our web site.

*Lorraine Maynard*

## Changing Woods

In the nine years I have lived in Bolnore, the woods have changed markedly, especially between the new building and the railway. Where I live was in the middle of Catt's Wood, and those who live on the other side of the tracks will have seen even more change; from when Ashenground Wood gave way to Sheppeys, and Wood Ride was exactly that.

We thought about whether, and if so, how, we should adjust our management plan, and have decided to increase the emphasis on clearings and coppicing. In this way we shall see trees at differing stages of growth and a woodland floor that is more conducive to flora and fauna.

Easier said than done! For clearings, we shall have to look to Mid Sussex District Council(MSDC). Coppicing can be done on our Task Days. Recently one group was joined by two young and strong young men. Golly! They made a difference! If only we could find more! But young people have busy lives, with work and families. We have started a conscious push to address this, at the Woodside opening followed up by a "Taster Day", without much success. We'll keep trying at our Sunday Task Days.

This is not to undervalue other areas where we need, and do get, help: delivering newsletters, marshalling events, and with the technicalities of desk-top publishing, maintaining our Web Site, and Facebook.

FOABW needs more help in keeping the woods the way they should be. The catch phrase is "I can do that!"

If we don't, who will?

*Michael Bradley*



## 2015 Subscriptions

A reminder that the annual subscription renewals fall due on 4<sup>th</sup> January.

The committee is very grateful to those who pay more than the minimum of £5.

Paying by standing order reduces administration costs. If you do not already pay in this way, an addressed envelope has been provided; please do one of the following.

- Set up a standing order by requesting the appropriate form from me.
- Send me a cheque, with your address on the back, payable to FoABW.
- Pay by bank transfer to account no. 10021310, sort code 60-10-26, giving your surname & initials as reference.

Thanks for your continuing support.

*Peter McKerchar*

## Ash Dieback Disease

This has been confirmed in young ash trees in Ashenground Wood. MSDC cut down the recently identified affected trees, and burnt them.

Facts about the disease:

- It is fungal, and probably a fairly new mutation of a fungus commonly present in woods all over Europe and the UK;
- The disease is spread by spores of the fungus on dead leaves. This is most likely to be by the wind, though movement of trees and wood may also be involved. It is probably now in many woods locally, carried on the winds, just as it arrived in Ashenground Wood
- It cannot be cured, and a young tree will die before the next season. Mature ashes may last for years.
- The ash has many genetic variations, so experts hope some trees will not be affected. This is why MSDC, who own our woods, will not be doing any pre-emptive felling. We hope some trees will escape, and can be used to propagate from.
- Cutting down and burning diseased trees may help to slow the spread of the fungus.

**Please don't remove any wood or plant material from the woodland – this also may help to slow the spread.**

## Annual General Meeting

**Sunday 1st March 2015 at 3.00 pm**

**At The Woodside (In Bolnore Village Recreation Field)**

The 2015 AGM is in Bolnore, where about half of our members live. The thought is that we plan to rotate the venue between Woodside and the Ashenground Community Centre. Members who live in Ashenground who would like, or can offer, a lift, can contact Michael Bradley. **01444 412644**. Email [wm.bradley@homecall.co.uk](mailto:wm.bradley@homecall.co.uk)

## Postscript

Do join us for **Conservation Work**. We meet each month on the **1st Sunday** (meeting place Ashenground Bridge) **2nd Wednesday** (call Stuart for venue on 07711 741947); **3rd Saturday** (meeting place the Thatched Cottage in Bolnore Village). Meeting time is 10.00 a.m. No expertise or tools needed. We will give you a warm welcome. Helpers needed for light and heavier work. There is a refreshment break.

See our **Programmes** on the notice boards. Look at our website: [www.foabw.com](http://www.foabw.com)  
And of course don't forget our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FoABW>

General Information – Contact Gill on 01444 415339  
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